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SERMON

PREACH'D AT

FARINGDON

In the County of

BERKS,

June 24th. 1717.

On the Occasion of Opening a
CHARITY-SCHOOL there.

By JOSEPH STOCKWELL, B. D. Fellow of
Trinity-College, OXON.

OXFORD,

Printed at the THEATER, for *Stephen Fletcher*: and are
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TO THE
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FAVINGDON



In the County of
Imprimatur,

B. E. K. No. 2

Vice-Chan. Oxon.

June 24. 1717. 2. 20.

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Charity-School there

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REVEREND
DR YOUNGER

S A R U M.

Reverend Sir,

I Presume to request Your Acceptance of a Discourse preach'd in a Parish within Your Peculiar Jurisdiction; on a Design too good not to be favour'd by You; and by a Person, who lies under very particular Obligations to Your Self, and that Worthy Body, over which You Preside.

*I shall not attempt to draw a
Character, which Deserves the Best
Pen, and do's not Need Any; You
will give me leave to pray, that God
would long preserve You for the Good
of His Church, which has no where
a better Friend, or a greater Orna-
ment.*

I am,

Sir,

Your most Oblig'd

Humble Servant

JOSEPH STOCKWELL

Trin. Coll. Oxon.

Sept. 30. 1717.

Prov. xxx. ver. 9. latter part.

*..... Lest I be poor, and steal, and
take the Name of my God in vain.*

THESE Words are the Reason given by
Agur, why he prayed to God to deli-
ver him from *Poverty*, and to feed him
with food convenient for him --- *Lest he
should steal, and take the name of his God in vain* ---
not that he thought *Poverty* any more included a
Necessity, than it is an Excuse for doing either;
but, I suppose, because he had made it his ob-
servation, that These were vices, into which Per-
sons of the meanest Rank were more especial-
ly liable to be insnared; as the lowness of their
Condition very often proves a Temptation to
the Former; and as Both may be too probably
the dismal Consequence of the want of a Reli-
gious Education, under which the generality of
the Poor have always labour'd; which must be
esteem'd a want of the greatest Convenience in
This Life, as of what is the most likely means
of our obtaining a Better.

But, whether this latter Phrase --- *take the
name of my God in vain* be to be understood in this
Place in the common and usual acceptation of
it, as it generally signifies the irreverent Usage
of the Name of God in our Ordinary discourse,
or prophaning it by vain and Common Swearing
upon light and trifling occasions; which indeed

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are vices now grown too Common to be chargeable upon any One state or Condition of life in Particular, *The rich and the poor* in this sense, too often *meeting together, and swearing by the Lord the Maker of them all*, lightly regarding that Holy and Awfull Name;

Or, whether by it is meant the using the name of God in a more Solemn, but more Impious Manner, by taking a false Oath, in order to make our selves appear innocent of any guilt charg'd upon us, *lest I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain* i. e. lest, after I have committed theft, I should farther add to my Guilt, by calling on the Name of God to attest my Innocence, and thereby hope to screen my self from shame or punishment; as One Sin is apt to call in Another to it's assistance, and Theft very often leads the way to Lying and Perjury;

Or lastly, whether by *taking the name of God in vain*, which is here mentioned as a Sin, which the poor were in more eminent danger of; be meant, the speaking lightly of Him, or *charging Him foolishly* with regard to the unequal dispensations of His Providence in this World. In which construction the sense of the place must be this, that as the Rich, when they are *Full*, are apt to *deny Him, and say, who is the Lord*; so the Poor under the sense of their Want, were apt to *steal* in distrust of His Providence, *and take His name in vain* by repining and murmuring at the inequality of His distributions; as the Former look't upon themselves to be Above His Reach, so the Latter esteem'd themselves as Below His Consideration; and, whilst Those Defy'd His Providence, These Suspected it;

In which soever of these three senses the Words are to be understood, 'tis certain, that the Holy Penman (in this Prayer, that he makes to Almighty God for a competent subsistence) doth intimate, that 'tis very difficult for a man to behave himself, as he ought, in Either of the Extreme conditions of life; that Wealth and Poverty have each of them their respective snares and temptations; that 'tis very hard for a man to *know*, either *how to want*, or *how to abound*; and in this latter clause marks out the vices, to which either from considering the Nature of things, or from some observations of Fact, he lookt upon the poor, as more especially addicted viz. *stealing, and taking the name of God in vain.*

I am not willing to enquire, how far the observation imply'd in the Text may with Justice be made of the Poor in these times. 'Tis part of the character of that Christian Grace, which hath call'd you together at this time, that it *thinketh no Evil*, is not forward to entertain or receive an ill opinion of any Particular Person, much less of any Order or Degree of Men. However, as Poverty is a state, that doth at least Subject Men to very strong Temptations, if not in Fact drive them to unlawfull courses; as the very occasion of this Present meeting doth plainly suppose, that the Children of the Poor would, without Your Charitable assistance, be depriv'd of the Benefit of being Early season'd with the Principles of Religion and Piety; as the Design of it is to make a Provision for their Temporal Welfare, by taking care, that they be bred up in some way of honest labour; but chiefly to provide for their Spiritual Welfare, by having them

them brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; in a word, as the Charity of this day is design'd to extend it self to the Souls and Bodies of those, on whom it is to be employ'd, to rescue the Growing Generation in some measure from Poverty it self, at least from the ill Consequences and Effects of it; I think, I can better answer the ends of this Present Solemnity, than by taking occasion from these Words

I. To inforce upon the Rich the Duty of contributing toward the relief and support of the Poor; and particularly to recommend to them that Eminent instance of Charity, which hath occasion'd Your present Meeting.

II. To caution the Poor against such vices, as the Circumstances of their Condition render them more liable to fall into, and to exhort them to the contrary Virtues.

I. I shall enforce upon the Rich the Duty of contributing toward the relief and support of the Poor; and particularly recommend to them that Eminent instance of Charity, which hath occasion'd Your present Meeting.

And one would think, there could not be a more forcible perswasive to this duty, than That which is suggested in the Text. If a state of extreme Want be a condition of so much Peril, if, as Solomon say's, *Prov. 10. 15. the destruction of the Poor is their Poverty*; (as all unlawfull means of supplying our Present wants lead to utter destruction

struction; and as, whatsoever is thus unjustly obtain'd, is, like *Achan's Wedge of Gold, the accursed thing, with which he, that is taken, shall be burnt with fire*) if, I say, the craving and pressing necessities of the Poor be so likely to tempt them, not only to the unlawfull *Coveting*, but even to sinfull methods of *Obtaining another man's Silver or Gold; to transgress for a piece of bread, and steal to satisfy their Souls, when they are hungry*; however Inexcusable They remain, let Us at least take care, that we don't in any measure partake in their Guilt. Let our Charity remove the plea of extreme Necessity; and, as we pray not to be led into *Temptation* our Selves, let us esteem it our Duty, as far as in us lies, to deliver Others out of it.

And indeed, did we but consider, that every, the poorest, man is our *Brother, for whom Christ dy'd*; did the Value, we set upon his Soul, bear any kind of proportion to the Price it Cost; every, the least, danger, that seem'd to threaten it, would more sensibly move and affect us. Can such *corruptible things, as silver and gold*, which were of too mean a value to be the Ransom of a Soul, be better employ'd, than so, as that they may add something to it's Security? But what a manifest disregard do we shew, for the Eternal as well as Temporal Interests of the Poor; how unlike do we behave our selves to That Compassionate Lover of Souls, Who *with a great Sum*, His own precious Blood, *obtain'd* their *Freedom*, if We by our Cruelty prove the unhappy occasion of leading them into Sin?

But, as nothing, that hath been said, nor any case, that may be suppos'd, can in any sense be admitted

as an excuse sufficient to Justify the Poor, if they are guilty of Sin on the foremention'd account; so neither do I undertake to determine, how far the Rich are Chargeable with any Consequences of this kind. But thus far, I think, we may safely argue, that since Poverty, especially any great degree of it, is (as the Text supposeth, and as Experience proves it) a State, that endangers our Vertue, and puts it to many severe Trials, it is our Duty to take Care, that We be not the Persons, *by whom the Offence cometh*; that Our behaviour to the Poor ought to be such, as should remove, rather than put farther discouragements and stumbling-blocks in their way; and that tis one Principal Commendation of, and ought to be a strong Motive to our Charity, that the timely supply of the Bodily Wants of our poor Brother, very often proves an Act of the Highest Charity to his Soul.

But we have no need to press the necessity of this Duty any farther from Uncertain Consequences, and such, as may perhaps be thought remote from us. If the Welfare of our Neighbour's Soul doth not depend upon our Performance of it in Any Measure; 'tis certain, that That of our Own doth in a very Great one; in as much as this is a Duty, that is charg'd and bound upon us,

- 1st. By the Law and Direction of Nature.
- 2^{dly}, By the Order and Design of Providence.
- 3^{dly}, By the Example of our Blessed Saviour, and
- 4^{ly}, By the Express Command of Almighty God.

1st, By the Law and Direction of Nature. A tender resentment, a quick sense and feeling of the wants and misfortunes, of the pain and misery, that

that our fellow Creatures endure, doth as properly Belong to, as it is the peculiar Ornament of Humane Nature. God Almighty hath implanted in us a natural tendency to pity and compassion; He hath given us a strong bent and inclination to *mourn with them, that mourn*; The Author of Nature hath annexed a sensible pleasure to the performance of all Offices of kindness and pity; hath plac'd in our very bowels a melting tenderness, a compassionate yearning towards our afflicted Neighbour; so that to relieve Him is in some measure to relieve a man's Self, as it rids him of that uneasiness, which naturally ariseth in his mind upon the sight of any such object. Now what can we call this natural impress on our Souls, but the voice of God, breathing Love, Compassion, and Charity; interweaving them as it were, with our very Constitution, and enjoying them upon us by the Law and Condition of our Being?

'Tis true indeed, that these soft and tender impressions (the nearest resemblance to the Divine Nature) may be, and are too often, effac'd from our Souls; and the *tender mercies of the wicked*, even that relenting Instinct, by which they are carried to acts of Pity, is by degrees hardned into *Cruelty* it'self. But this is a mere Force put upon Humane Nature; the Scripture expresseth it by *shutting up our bowels, and stopping our ears*. A man must *pass by on the other side*, as the Priest and Levite did; must avoid the Sight of that misery, which he is resolv'd not to Feel, or else Humanity will be apt to struggle within him, to plead in *its own Cause*, and suggest to him, that *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it*.

For

For this Propensity, by which One man is mov'd to Interest himself and to bear a share in the miseries of Another, I take to be founded in the Common Relation, and in the Common Necessities of Mankind. And these likewise contain very strong reasons for our endeavouring to Cultivate and Cherish it; to retain our *hearts of flesh*, and not exchange them for those of *stone*. For if we consider, that *God hath made of one blood all nations of Men*; that He is *the Common Father*, of whom *the whole Family is nam'd*; that our Necessitous Brother is deriv'd from the same Stock with our Selves, and that *He, that made us in the womb, made him*; then surely, what Nature prompts us to, will appear to be no more, than what Reason will justify; that, as *Members of one Body*, we should *have all the same Care one for another*, and in some Proportion be affected with a sense and feeling of the Pain, that Any one Part endures. And further, if we consider wants, misfortunes and misery, not, as they happen to be the Lot of this or that Particular Person, but, as they are in themselves an Entail upon our Whole Nature; that We are equally involv'd in the guilt, that deriv'd this Curse upon Mankind, with Him, that endures it; that our Present exemption from it is both a privilege, that we could no way claim, and what we are not sure, will be made Perpetual to us; even Interest it self will carry us to pity Humane Nature in Distress; we shall *remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being our selves also in the Body*.

Now, whereas in Other Cases a Course of Piety and Vertue is a state of perpetual Conflict with the natural appetites and inclinations of Man; in

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This Particular, unless a man takes a great deal of Pains to bring himself to a degree of Insensibility, there is something even in Flesh and Blood, that will strongly plead and sollicit in behalf of the necessitous and distressed. And shall not Grace then perfect that work, which Nature thus happily lays the foundation and beginning of? Ought not we to cherish and second every motion of this kind; to improve Instinct into Vertue, and out of a Principle of Tenderness produce Acts of Charity? The Apostle hath branded with a peculiar mark of Infamy those, that are *lovers of their own selves, and covetous*. A man of this contracted and selfish spirit, divested of the generous Principles of humanity and tender heartedness, like a Benumm'd and Dead Limb, shews, that he hath no vital communication with the Body, and may rather be accounted an Incumbrance, than properly esteemed a Part of it. But let not us *break asunder these bands of Love*, nor cast away these *cords of a man*, by which we are ty'd and united to one another; but let us esteem it the great goodness of God that we are Inclined, as we are Comanded to relieve our Brother; and, that what He hath made our Duty, is likewise our Choice.

2dly, We are bound and requir'd to contribute toward the relief and support of the Poor, by the order and design of Providence.

The appointing this regular subordination, that is seen in the different states and degrees of life, the allotting to each member its respective office, the *lifting up one, and setting down another*, the assigning to each part of this great body, what rank and quality it is to bear; these things are not the effects of hazard or adventure, or the de-

cision of a lot cast into the lap, which favours this or that Person, as it happens; but are at the sole disposal, and under the immediate direction of Almighty God, whose is the Earth and the fulness thereof; whose Blessing it is, that maketh rich; who gives us our Corn and Wine and Oil, and multiplies our Silver and our Gold.

And, if this be the Tenure, by which we Hold all that we have, if it be deriv'd from God Almighty, it will very much become us to enquire, upon what Terms and Conditions we receiv'd it; whether He hath given it to us Absolutely, to be us'd at Discretion, and we are at liberty to *do what we will with it, as our own*, or whether He hath not Charg'd it with (what we may think) an Incumbrance; whether it be not granted to us, under some certain Reservations; in a word, whether He hath not some way or other signify'd to us, to what uses and purposes it is to be employ'd.

Now, as we can't but conclude, that an Allwise Governour of the World had great ends to serve, by making so unequal a distribution of these outward Blessings; so, if he hath distinguish'd Us from many of our Fellow-creatures by a larger share and proportion of them; 'tis our Duty to comply with His wise and good designs, as far as they come to our knowledge. And, would we but consider, that *the Lord is the maker both of the rich and poor*; that *His mercy is over all his works*; that *He is good unto all, and careth for all alike*; we must conclude, that He hath not left any of his Creatures so destitute, as to have made no Provision for their Subsistence, as long as He is pleas'd to continue their Abode in this World. To suppose this would be to entertain very unworthy thoughts of

Providence; And therefore *Solomon* tells us, that *he, that mocketh the Poor, reproacheth his Maker*, casts the highest reflection possible on the Divine Justice; such a one, as carry's in it an intimation, that, as the Poor lye at the mercy of others for a precarious Subsistence, so they stand expos'd to their arbitrary Insults; that they are so abandon'd, as to have no right to the Former, and so helpless, as to have no defence against the Latter.

But the same God, who hath promis'd to *undertake their Cause*, hath likewise provided for their Supply. 'Tis the exprefs Condition of our receiving, what we have, that there should be, as it were, a Reserv'd Rent, an acknowledgment and return paid back to the Poor, whom the Sovereign Owner of the World hath appointed to receive it. God Almighty hath chosen to relieve Men by Men, to make the Rich *Stewards over His household, to give their Fellow-servants their meat in due season*; He hath entrusted Them with the Care and Guardianship of the Poor, in order to try the Fidelity of the One, and to exercise the Faith and Patience of the Other. And, since *He hath given the Earth to the children of Men* (a Provision Design'd, as it is sufficient, for All his Creatures) he, who refuseth to bestow out of his Superfluity, whilst others want for the Necessities of life, breaks in upon the Order and Design of Providence; claims a Propriety in that, which was committed to him under the Obligation of a Trust; doth not consider, *who it was, that made him differ from another, what he hath receiv'd, from whom, and to what End he receiv'd it.*

3dly, Let us consider our obligation to this duty from the example of our Blessed Saviour. And

this is an example so far above the Reach of the Highest humane Charity, that it were presumptuous to propound it to your imitation, had not He himself made His Love, not only the Motive to, but in some instances the Measure of Ours. *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* That universal good will, which He bore to Mankind, is what we must endeavour to copy after; His beneficent expressions of it upon every occasion, that offer'd, are what we must study to make our Practice; and, as far as the Life of Charity, which He led, is imitable by Us, so far He must be understood to have left us an Example, that we should follow His steps.

It was not enough for His Humility and Condescension, to be *Himself a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, to be Born in a low, and Live in an afflicted Condition, to *take upon Him our nature*, and with it all the Wants and Infirmities of it; but he shew'd thro' His whole life the most generous instances of Love and Humanity; partook in all the wants and misfortunes of others; and, in that sense too, *bore our griefs and carried our sorrows*. With what diligence may we observe Him *going about doing good*, seeking for opportunities of administering relief to the Bodys as well as Souls of Men, and, according to His Command in the Parable, *searching the high-ways and hedges for Objects of Charity*?

In what did He declare *His Almighty Power*, so much as in *showing mercy and pity*? Or what Miracle did He work, in which there was not some Act of Charity principally intended? How should the Instance of His *Compassion on the Multitude*, and His Concern, *lest they should faint by the way*, Shame the

the Cruel and Unrelenting? in which He made His Power and Goodness at once to be known, *satify'd the Poor with bread, and prepar'd for them a table in the Wilderness.* In a word, what suit did this Compassionate Lover of Mankind ever suffer to pass unregarded? with what readiness did He Grant Every, and Prevent Some requests? All the Passages of His life are so many Acts of disinterested Love.

Nay the Scripture, in an expression the most Condescending, represents Him as *an High Priest*, which, even in His State of Glory and Exaltation, is toucht with the feeling of our Infirmities, in that He Himself was made Subject to, and Suffer'd the like in His State of Humiliation, and *was in all points tempted, like as we are.* Heb. 2. 18. 4. 15. As if the Blessed Jesus did even yet retain the Print of the Nails and Spear in His Glorify'd Body, remembered the Hunger He endur'd in the Wilderness, the Thirst on the Cross, and the Agony in the Garden, that He might be a *merciful High-Priest*, that He might be thereby mov'd to Succour Humane Nature in Every the like Instance of Distress.

And, as in His coming into the World, next to the reconciling God to Man, He had nothing more in view, than to reconcile Men to One Another, to establish this *new Commandement*, and to make it the distinction of His disciples; so 'twas to enforce this duty upon our minds, that Himself became a Living Pattern and Instance of it, and, as He told his Disciples upon the occasion of His having Condescended to one of the meanest offices of life, He hath left us an example, that we should do to others, as He hath done to us.

4ly, But, if the example of a Compassionate and Tender Redeemer, whose Life was a constant Course, and whose Death was an amazing and most expensive Act of Charity, will not prevail with us to *have Compassion on our Fellow-servants, as our Lord had Pity on us*; if we are not mov'd by all, that He did and suffer'd in His Humane Nature; at least let His Authority over us, as He is God, and that Undoubted Right, He hath to order all our Actions, nay even to dispose of our Affections, let His express Commands so frequently repeated, and so vehemently urg'd, enforc'd by the greatest Rewards, and the severest Penalties, impos'd on us by the Supreme Law-giver, and under the highest Sanctions, that any Law can receive; let these convince us, that the relieving our poor brethren is nothing less, than a matter of positive and indispensable Duty; what God Almighty absolutely requires of us, not only as a Test of the Love, we bear to Those, whom we relieve, but as a Proof of our Love and Obedience to Him.

And, where Charity is cold, 'tis an infallible sign, that there Religion is near extinct. For what is the practice of Religion, but an habit of doing every thing, which we know to be pleasing to Almighty God; or what less than This is sufficient to denominate any one a Religious man? The habitual and voluntary omission of any thing, which we know to be agreeable to His will, is utterly inconsistent with That Character. And where then is our Religion without Charity, without that Duty, upon which our Saviour hath laid so Peculiar and Emphatical a stress; that *Mercy*, which God declares, He requires preferably to

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Sacrifice? Whoso hath this World's goods, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth his bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?

Accordingly our Saviour in the 25th of St Matth. placeth to His Own account, whatever is Charitably bestow'd on His poor Brethren, *Ye did it unto Me; Come ye Blessed of my Father*: and on the other hand reckons every denial of our assistance and relief, as a personal hardship to Himself, *Ye did it not to Me; Depart from Me ye cursed*. Thus *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain mercy* at a time, when they stand most in need of it, at the last and dreadful Day of reckoning; as at the same time, *he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shew'd no mercy*.

And thus we see, that in some sense our Saviour Himself, in the Person of His poor Representatives, asks us, as He did the *Woman of Samaria, Give me to drink*; and we like her churlishly reply, *How is it that thou askest drink of me?* But did we know the gift of God, and who it is, that saith to us, *give me to drink*; did we consider, that He, who in His poor Members is the Object, will in His Kingdom be the Reward of our Charity, will in return give us living water, everlasting life and happiness; then sure if Compassion would not move us, at least Interest would; and we should be glad of every opportunity of making so advantageous an Exchange.

So forcible are the motives, so strong the obligations to this Duty, which I have been endeavouring to recommend to you in General. The Particular Objects, upon whom, and Occasions, when 'tis to be exercis'd, it
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must be left to every man's Prudence and Discretion to determine; as the Measure and Degree of it must to his Conscience. But you must give me leave to recommend one particular Instance of it to you, which I take as much to exceed all Other Acts of Charity, as That exceeds all Other Graces and Vertues. I can't be understood to mean any other, than that, which hath call'd you together at this time, which, as it is truly an Act of Charity, as flowing immediately from the highest Love and Regard to those, on whom it is employ'd; so tis a Charity truly Religious, as having the Love of God, for it's Foundation and Principle.

Those, for whom I am now pleading, with regard to their outward quality and condition in this World, may be look't upon as the *Least of our Saviour's brethren*, but they are not the *Least* in His regard and esteem. Our Lord frequently took occasion to express a most tender concern for Children; recommending their Innocence to our Imitation, and their Helplessness to our Care and Protection; telling us, that to *receive one of them in His name* was to receive Him; and strictly cautioning us, that we should *take heed, that we despise not one of these little ones*.

In what sense can we more properly be said to *receive* such Children *in the name of Christ*, than by taking care, that they have an early knowledge of the Dutys of Christianity. *Suffer little Children to come unto Me, and forbid them not*, faith our Saviour to His Disciples; from which Place our Excellent Church hath with good reason concluded, that *we need not doubt, but that He favourably alloweth that Charitable Work of ours in bringing Children*

Children to His Holy Baptism. And yet better had it been for them not to have been Baptiz'd at all, if they are not afterwards made to understand, what that Baptism is; what a Solemn Vow and Profession they have made, what obligations and engagements they lye under to perform it, and what a risque and hazard they run, if they neglect it.

Or in what sense could we more truly be said to *despise* or *offend these little ones*, than, if we should express no regard, or concern for those *Souls*, which, tho' the Purchase of the blood of Christ, are yet in eminent danger of being lost? Vice and Wickedness naturally take Root in the Child, and Grow up with the Man; whereas Religion and Virtue are more like things of a Foreign growth, which must be planted and nurs'd up with more then ordinary Care, or else they will certainly be choakt up with the Tares, the Natural produce of the Soil. And can there then be greater Objects of pity, than Children *left in the hands of their own Counsel*, depriv'd even of the benefit of knowing their duty, and taking their directions from a Corrupt nature Within, and Vicious examples Without them? What can be expected in such a Case, but that their *latter end* shou'd be worse, than their *beginning*; and that these first tendencies to vice will by degrees advance into confirm'd and masterly habits? Would we prevent this effectually, we must begin at that age, which is the most susceptible of good or ill impressions, and the most likely to retain those, it hath receiv'd. And how do we know, what a mighty Influence this Early care may have upon the future government

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of their lives? *God is able of these stones to raise up Children unto Abraham*; to bless the seed sown with a prodigious increase; and we need not doubt, but that He will do so; for *it is not the will of our heavenly Father, that any of these little ones should perish*.

To conclude this point --- This is a Charity the most extensive, and the most lasting. *It is Righteousness, that exalteth a nation*; and therefore the best Christian is the best Subject; so that this is a design, which manifestly tends to promote the general good, as it is the most likely means of putting a stop to that, which is the band and reproach of any People. We have reason to hope, that this good seed, when it hath taken root, will fill the land; make examples of virtue and piety as Frequent, as, I fear, they have been Rare and Uncommon among those of the poorer sort; and that, where sin abounded, there grace will much more abound. *Save and deliver us (O God) from the hand of strange children, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of iniquity; that our Sons may grow up as the young plants, and that our daughters may be as the polished Corners of the Temple; that there be no Decay, no leading into Captivity, no Complaining, no Swearing or Cursing in our streets. Happy are the people, that are in such a Case* —

I have gone thro', what I propos'd to speak to first; but the Charity of *this day* aiming chiefly at the spiritual benefit of the poor, it would be by no means foreign to it, would the Compass of this discourse allow me, as I propos'd,

2ly To Caution the poor against such vices, as the Circumstances of their condition render them more

more liable to fall into, and exhort them to the Contrary virtues.

I have not time to do this, so fully as I design'd; and therefore shall only point out two vices, which seem to me more particularly hinted at in the Text -- 1st Dishonesty or Injustice; and 2^{dly} Discontentedness, and Murmuring at their Condition.

1st. Dishonesty or a breach of the rules of justice, with regard to what is another man's property.

As we are not to carve out our own Fortunes in this World, so neither are we to remove the Landmarks and Boundaries, which the great Owner of the World hath set; for, what by Humane laws is determin'd to be a man's Property, by the Divine is made his Right, and cannot without injustice be invaded. And therefore, tho' the poor both by the Laws of God and Man are entitl'd to a competent provision and support, yet by Both are they forbidden to be judges in their Own case; they are only to appeal to an Higher Court, and to commit themselves to Him, who is the *helper of the friendless*.

Better is the poor man, than a liar, saith Solomon, the poor, that walk's in his integrity, as he elsewhere explains himself, is in an infinitely better Condition, than he who by fallshood and lying puts a cheat upon Another man, but a much greater upon Himself, robs his Neighbour of his Goods at the loss of his Own Soul; makes such an exchange as he is so far from being a gainer by, that at one day he'd be glad to give the whole World to reverse the bargain.

Admirable is the resolution of Holy *Job*, who from the most plentiful and affluent Fortune was reduc'd to the lowest degree of Adversity— *As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vext my soul; my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit; Till I dye, I will not remove my Integrity from me; my righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go, my heart shall not reproach me, as long as I live. For what (saith He) is the hope of the hypocrite, tho he hath gain'd, when God taketh away his soul? What Gain can be equivalent to that Loss? what art or trick sufficient to repair it? or what Want can be comparably grievous to the Want of a drop of water to cool a tongue tormented in that Flame?*

The second vice, against which I shall caution the Poor, is Discontentedness and Murmuring at their Condition. What *St. Paul* had learnt, in *whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content*, is a necessary, but very difficult lesson, crossing the perverse and querulous disposition of mankind, who are for prescribing laws to Omnipotence, directing Infinite Wisdom, controuling the Sovereign Authority of the great Ruler of the world.

But as Discontent is very often the Fault even of the richest, so the Contrary is as much the Duty of the poorest, who ought humbly and patiently to acquiesce in the Divine disposal; not to fret at him, whose way doth prosper, but with a submissive modesty and entire resignation to leave the Government of the World to Him, that Made it; to lay their hands upon their mouths and confess, that 'twas His doing.

And if we go no farther, than to God's unlimited

mitted and sovereign Authority over us, we may see, how arrogant, as well as vain, a thing it is for us to murmur at that station, in which He hath plac'd us. 'Tis in a manner to renounce His Authority, and dispute His Right over us. *Shall the thing formed say unto Him, that form'd it, why hast thou made me thus?* And may not God expostulate with us, as He did with *Jonah*— *Dost thou well to be angry?* is it a modest thing for a Creature to contend or stand upon terms with His Creator; or to think it hard, that he hath not more, when all, that he hath, is a free gift, and that undeserv'd?

But if we go one step farther, we shall find yet a greater argument for Contentment, in the Wisdom of God Almighty. Tho' He may dispense His favours Arbitrarily, yet He never doth it, but with unerring Discernment. His gifts are never misplac'd or ill bestow'd, however ill they may be manag'd or apply'd by us; and therefore whatever part is allotted to us to act in this World, we may be sure, is that, which is most Fitting and Becoming us; because 'tis by the designation and appointment of Infinite Wisdom. And this thought should, one would think, effectually silence our Clamours, that the affairs of this World are not govern'd by Chance (for then indeed the Poor would have reason to think, that they had Hard Luck) but that they are directed by God's overruling Providence; and that, tho' we can't now discover, by what rules and measures He acts, yet we may depend upon it, that, as *He maketh poor and maketh rich*, so He doth Both for the wisest and the best reasons; and therefore we should say with

with resign'd *Eli*— *It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.*

But what greater argument can there be for Contentment in Poverty, than the example of the Son of God, who thought it not only Tolerable, but Eligible; who made choice of the meanest state of Life, plac'd Himself in the lowest rank of men, as to His outward Condition, as it were on Purpose to rescue Poverty from disgrace, and to keep the Poor from repining; who, tho' He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor; had not where to lay His head; came not to be ministr'd unto, but to minister; was content to be among us, as one that serveth; sought not ours, but us; and, as it were in a state of Minority, differ'd nothing from a servant, tho' He was Lord of all.

To conclude—The Duty of the Poor in this respect is, after they have done the best, they can by their own labour and industry, to cast all their Care on Him, who careth for them; to put their whole trust and confidence in Him, and to testify it by frequent Acts of Prayer to Him; to depend upon Him for Temporal Blessings, that He, who feedeth the young ravens, will likewise, according to His own gracious promise, fill the hungry with good things; but chiefly to depend on Him, and to pray for Spiritual Blessings, that He will be pleas'd to sanctify their present Condition to them, give them grace to make a right use of it; dispose them to the exercise of all those vertues, which their particular station points out to them, and at last exchange their present Want for Riches, that shall never fade away, and repay their *Light and Momentary Afflictions* with Happiness without End and without Measure.

May the Rich and Poor practice the respective Duties of their several conditions; may the Former *be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to Communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal life;* and may the Latter be of the number of those, whom God hath chosen—— *the Poor of this World, but Rich in Faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He hath promis'd to them, that love Him.*

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